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Of Miles Davis

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Over the dead fields of plenty,
Taking its time with crows overhead
All the way home to West L.A.

OF MILES DAVIS

for Paul Zimmer

The pop-out eyes belong to Baldwin
But are sadder, meaner, more direct
In their accusations against us.

The French have given him a medal
And assigned him Picasso's genius.
In the Third World he outsells Bird.

Costumed tonight in a shimmering tent
Of silver, he stands under the spot,
Head crook'd, glasses as dark

As the eyes of Tiresias.
He's blowing a funky put-to-gether
Bouquet of malevolent flowers

From *Bitches Brew* and *Live Evil*
Still daring all comers to take in
The African off-beats and squeaks,

The electric sub-harmonies and shifts
Midstream, notes without place
Except in Black air only—

As from the Devil himself—the whole sound
Shaking with a cocaine jumpiness
He says he finally did kick.

And yet, here and there, we hear it,
That muted horn from *Kind of Blue*
Almost as slow, almost that orchidaceous

Blossoming drawn from a sadness
Nameless, we think, but for the music—
With Bird close by and Trane coming on.

THE SECOND DEATH

It takes place sometime after a sleep
In which we've been held in the arms
Of a vague light while our words float
Around us joining and unjoining greyly.

When the trumpets announce the Great Judgment
Everything is as it was when we lived
And we stand before ourselves first
And tell truthfully that what we have done
Is what others did only that we do not
Excuse ourselves from following them.

Then it is that the Hebrew word for hell
Has its beauty restored—gehenna
In signal flare red, the place of garbage
And death near Jerusalem, where the worm
Never dies from eating us.

Only then
Will we truly believe that our lives
Are worthy of eternal punishment.